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### SWEET LIES

You and your best friend go to this bar and it's late inside, the music and colored lights in the boozy haze reminding you of all the ends of all the parties you ever went to, that began in wonder and surprise but lasted far too long. There are no surprises here. Few surprises anywhere. Yet each day and every night grins with anticipation. There's a stage, not very big but big enough for your fantasies to strut and strip to some country-western song about bad women and good whiskey. A girl bares her breasts and lets a middle-aged married stranger stick a dollar bill in her G-string. In exchange she squats and blows him a kiss, shakes her breasts in his flushed face. A dollar's worth of love and then she moves on. Like beauty, like passion, she is always moving on. But later, the same girl, off-stage and dressed in lacy red lingerie, walks up to you and casually falls into your lap. She snuggles against you and lets you run your fingers the length and breadth of her long tan legs. Your friend asks her why she picked you. She shrugs. He tries to lure her onto his lap, for just a minute, come on. He offers her gifts, to take her places, a hundred dollars cash. But she stays with you.



Not because you're any different but because this is where she wants to be for the moment. Because she can do it, can stir this unrest, a toppler of empires. A waitress asks if you'd like another drink. When you say yes she says what about the young lady? Sure. You give the waitress ten dollars. She brings your drink, a shot for the girl in your lap, and ten cents change. Meanwhile the girl has been telling you her story, personal things, and you wonder if they're true, or which parts might be. You wonder if she has another story for the next guy, like dealing out cards, a deck for the whole bar. And you decide that it doesn't matter. For the moment she is yours, your best friend is jealous, when her shoe slips off you lean over, fetch it, slip it back on her foot, knowing that any second she could get up and disappear, so you hold her as if she were all the world's sweet lies.

#### MY DEATH

— after Vallejo and Justice

I will die in Ohio  
in the sun and it  
will be a day like  
so many Ohio days,  
full of the flowing  
of the green-gray  
river, the mowing of  
little lawns, scarcely  
any notice of more than  
the weather. Old men  
on old front porches  
will mop their brows  
and fret about corn,  
tomatoes, carburetors,  
departing skies and  
coming winds. I think  
it will be a Saturday,  
busy with laundry hung  
on clotheslines, with  
chores in the garage,  
trips to stores for nuts  
and bolts, butter and  
bread, wrapping paper  
for a birthday party.  
A car wash will be held  
in the lot of a bank or  
gas station, where a girl's